

4.3 CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section describes the cultural resources at the Project site and general vicinity. Cultural resources include prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, archaeological districts, historic buildings and structures, and isolated occurrences of artifacts.

Information used in preparing this section and in evaluating potential impacts on cultural resources was derived from the Archaeological and Paleontological Assessment Report for the Energy Source Mineral, LLC Project (Cultural Resources Assessment) prepared by Chambers Group in January 2021. This document is contained in Appendix D of this EIR. Due to the confidential nature of the location of cultural resources, information regarding locations of these resources has been removed and is not included in the appendix.

4.3.1 Existing Environmental Setting

Existing Conditions

The Project is located within the mid-region of the lower Colorado Desert physiography in Calipatria, Imperial County, California. Calipatria is approximately 10 miles north of Brawley, California. The average annual temperature in Brawley is 72.3 °F (22.4 degrees Celsius [°C]). Virtually no rainfall occurs during the year; about 2.4 inches of precipitation falls annually. The difference in precipitation between the driest month and the wettest month is 0.39 inch. The average temperatures vary during the year by 69.6 °F (20.9 °C). The warmest month of the year is July, with an average temperature of 91.6 °F (33.1 °C). In January, the average temperature is 54.0 °F (12.2 °C).

Cultural Setting

Prehistory

The Project site is located in the mid-section of the lower Colorado Desert, in which Lake Cahuilla is situated. In addition to paleontological potential, the archaeological deposition found around the shoreline of Lake Cahuilla is radiocarbon-dated as old as 1440 Before Present (B.P.) or 650 Anno Domini (A.D.) and shows demonstrable evidence of cultural activity in the area. Due to Lake Cahuilla previously creating a massive freshwater oasis, seasonal occupations are evident in archaeological deposition, which includes pottery, ground and chipped stone artifacts, and archaeological features such as rock fish traps. In regard to the ethnographic landscape, the Cahuilla, Kumeyaay, and Cocopa settled in various locations, including the northern portion of the basin, southern portion of the basin, and the delta, respectively. Only the Cocopa used fishing nets as a means of subsistence method, while Kumeyaay and Cahuilla constructed the stone fish trap features, which can be difficult to identify as such during a pedestrian transect survey. Moreover, evidence from middens and human coprolites suggest subsistence on either razorback suckers or bonytail chubs, demonstrating environmental importance of this area. Cultural resources found in the area are associated with Lake Cahuilla due to temporal context and functional use of landscape, which yield high archaeological significance of how people adapted to the changing environment around the lake.

Archaeological studies have been limited in the Salton Sea desert region. This paucity of archaeological investigation has resulted in undefined and imperfect archaeological classification schemas and typologies. Therefore, the prehistoric time periods used by archaeologists to describe the southern

Imperial County desert region borrow heavily from those chronologies established for San Diego County prehistory, with some minor Colorado Desert-specific clarifications. The three general time periods accepted in the region are the San Dieguito Complex, the Archaic period, and the Late Prehistoric period. These periods are briefly described below.

The earliest recognized occupation of the region, dating to 10,000 to 8,000 years B.P., is known as the San Dieguito complex. Assemblages from this occupation generally consist of flaked stone tools. Evidence of milling activities is rare for sites dating to this period. It is generally agreed that the San Dieguito complex shows characteristics of the Western Pluvial Lakes Tradition (WPLT), which was widespread in California during the early Holocene. The WPLT assemblage generally includes scrapers, choppers, and bifacial knives. Archaeologists theorize this toolkit composition likely reflects a generalized hunting and gathering society.

The following period, the Archaic (8,500 to 1,300 B.P.), is traditionally seen as encompassing both coastal and inland adaptations, with the coastal Archaic represented by the shell middens of the La Jolla complex and the inland Archaic represented by the Pauma complex. Coastal settlement is also thought to have been significantly affected by the stabilization of sea levels around 4,000 years ago that led to a general decline in the productivity of coastal ecosystems. Artifacts associated with this period include milling stones, unshaped manos, flaked cobble tools, Pinto-like and Elko projectile points, and flexed inhumations. Colorado Desert rock art studies have led researchers to suggest Archaic Period origins for many petroglyph and pictograph styles and elements common in later times. More recently, several important late Archaic period sites have been documented in the northern Coachella Valley, consisting of deeply buried middens with clay-lined features and living surfaces, cremations, hearths, and rock shelters. Faunal assemblages show a high percentage of lagomorphs (rabbits and hares). The larger sites suggest a more sustained settlement type than previously known for the Archaic period in this area.

The Late Prehistoric period (1,300 to 200 B.P.) is marked by the appearance of small projectile points indicating the use of the bow and arrow, the common use of ceramics, and the general replacement of inhumations with cremations, all characteristic of the San Luis Rey complex as defined by Meighan (1954). The San Luis Rey complex is divided temporally into San Luis Rey I and San Luis Rey II, with the latter distinguished mainly by the addition of ceramics. Along the coast of northern San Diego County, deposits containing significant amounts of Donax shell are now often assigned to the Late Prehistoric, based on a well-documented increase in the use of this resource at this time. The inception of the San Luis Rey complex is suggested by True (1966) to mark the arrival of Takiic speakers from regions farther inland. Waugh (1986) is in general agreement with True but suggests that the migration was probably sporadic and took place over a considerable period. Titus (1987) cites burials showing physical differences between pre- and post-1,300 B.P. remains to further support this contention. However, some researchers have suggested that these Shoshonean groups may have arrived considerably earlier, perhaps as early as 4,000 years ago. Vellanoweth and Altschul (2002) provide an excellent summary of the various avenues of thought on the Shoshonean Incursion.

Ethnography

The Project site was occupied by the Cahuilla, Kumeyaay, Kamia, and the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT). The closest reservation is the Torres-Martinez Indian Reservation, currently home to the desert Cahuilla Indians, on the northwest side of the Salton Sea, roughly 41 miles from the Project site. Following is a brief ethnographic and archaeological summary of the Cahuilla, Kumeyaay, Kamia, and Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT).

Cahuilla

The Project site currently falls within the ethnographic territory of the Cahuilla, whose ancestors may have entered this region of Southern California approximately 3,000 years ago. The Cahuilla ancestral territory is located near the geographic center of Southern California and varied greatly topographically and environmentally, ranging from forested mountains to desert areas. Natural boundaries such as the lower Colorado Desert provided the Cahuilla separate territory from the neighboring Mojave, Ipai, and Tipai. In turn, mountains, hills, and plains separated the Cahuilla from the adjacent Luiseño, Gabrielino, and the Serrano.

The Cahuilla relied heavily on the exploitation and seasonal availability of faunal and floral resources through a pattern of residential mobility that emphasized hunting and gathering. Important floral species used in food, for manufacturing of products, and/or for medicinal uses primarily included acorns, mesquite and screw beans, piñon nuts, and various cacti bulbs. Coiled-ware baskets were common and used for a variety of tasks including food preparation, storage, and transportation.

Networks of trails linked villages and functioned as hunting, trading, and social conduits. Trade occurred between the Cahuilla and tribes such as the Gabrielino as far west as Santa Catalina and the Pima as far east as the Gila River. Both goods and technologies were frequently exchanged between the Cahuilla and nearby Serrano, Gabrielino, and Luiseño cultural groups.

The Cahuilla are believed to have first come into contact with Europeans prior to the Juan Bautista de Anza expedition in 1774; however, little direct contact was established between the Cahuilla and the Spanish except for those baptized at the Missions San Gabriel, San Luis Rey, and San Diego. Following the establishment of several *asistencias* near the traditional Cahuilla territories, many Spanish cultural forms — especially agriculture and language — were adopted by the Cahuilla people.

Through the Rancho and American periods, the Cahuilla continued to retain their political autonomy and lands despite more frequent interactions with European-American immigrants. In 1863, a large number of the population was killed by a sweeping smallpox epidemic that affected many of the tribal groups in Southern California. The first reservations established in Imperial County circa 1865 saw many of the Cahuilla remaining on their traditional lands. After 1891, however, all aspects of the Cahuilla economic, political, and social life were closely monitored by the federal government; a combination of missionaries and government schools drastically altered the Cahuilla culture.

Kumeyaay

In addition to the Cahuilla, Native American people occupying the region also included the Kumeyaay. The Kumeyaay or Tipai-Ipai were formerly known as the Kamia or Diegueños, the former Spanish name applied to the Mission Indians living along the San Diego River, and are referred to as the Kumiai in Mexico. Today, members of the tribe prefer to be called Kumeyaay. The territory of the Kumeyaay extended north from Todos Santos Bay near Ensenada, Mexico, to the mouth of the San Luis Rey River in north San Diego County, and east to the Sand Hills in central Imperial Valley near the current Project site. The Kumeyaay occupied the southern and eastern desert portions of the territory, while the Ipai inhabited the northern coastal region.

The primary source of subsistence for the of Kumeyaay was vegetal food. Seasonal travel followed the ripening of plants from the lowlands to higher elevations of the mountain slopes. Buds, blossoms,

pothebs, wild seeds, cactus fruits, and wild plums were among the diet of Kumeyaay. The Kumeyaay practiced limited agriculture within the floodplain areas of their territory. Melons, maize, beans, and cowpeas were planted. Women sometimes transplanted wild onion and tobacco plants to convenient locations and sowed wild tobacco seeds. Deer, rodents, and birds provided meat as a secondary source of sustenance. Families also gathered acorns and piñon nuts at the higher altitudes. Village locations were selected for seasonal use and were occupied by exogamous, patrilineal clans. Three or four clans would winter together and then disperse into smaller bands during the spring and summer (Luomala 1978).

Kumeyaay structures varied with the seasons. Summer shelter consisted of a wind break, tree, or a cave fronted with rocks. Winter dwellings had slightly sunken floors topped with dome-shaped structures made of brush thatch covered with grass and earth.

Upon death, the Kumeyaay cremated the body of the deceased. Ashes were placed in a ceramic urn and buried or hidden in a cluster of rocks. The family customarily held a mourning ceremony one year after the death of a family member. During this ceremony, the clothes of the deceased individual were burned to ensure that the spirit would not return for his or her possessions.

It is estimated that the pre-contact Kumeyaay population living in this region ranged from approximately 3,000 to 9,000. Beginning in 1775, the semi-nomadic life of the Kumeyaay began to change as a result of contact with European-Americans, particularly from the influence of the Spanish missions. Through successive Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo-American control, the Kumeyaay people were forced to adopt a sedentary lifestyle and accept Christianity. As of 1968, Kumeyaay population was somewhere between approximately 1,322 and 1,522; and by 1990 an estimated 1,200 Kumeyaay lived on reservation lands while 2,000 lived elsewhere.

Trade was a very important feature of Kumeyaay subsistence, coastal groups traded salt, dried seafood, dried greens, and abalone shells to inland and desert groups for products such as acorns, agave, mesquite beans, and gourds. Travel and trade were accomplished by means of an extensive network of trails. Kumeyaay living in the mountains of eastern San Diego County frequently used these trails to travel down to the Kamia settlement of *Xatopet* on the east/west portion of the Alamo River to trade and socialize in winter.

Kamia

The Kamia lived to the east of the Project site in an area that included Mexicali and bordered the Salton Sea. The traditional territory of the Kamia included the southern Imperial Valley from the latitude of the southern half of the Salton Sea to well below what is the United States–Mexico international border. The Kamia tribe of Indigenous Peoples of the Americas live at the northern border of Baja California in Mexico and the southern border of California in the United States. Their main settlements were along the New and Alamo Rivers. Their Kumeyaay language belongs to the Yuman–Cochimí language family.

Subsistence of the Kamia consisted of hunting and gathering and floodplain horticulture. In normal years, the Colorado River would overflow its banks in the spring and early summer and fill rivers such as the New and Alamo. When the floodwaters receded, the Kamia would plant in the mud. A dam was maintained at *Xatopet* on the east/west portion of the Alamo River to control water flow and allow farming in years when water flow was insufficient. Gifford (1931) and Castetter and Bell (1951) suggested these were recent adaptations and not traditional life ways. Bean and Lawton (1973), Lawton and Bean (1968), and Shipek (1988) argue that irrigation was indigenous.

The Kamia's major food staple was mesquite and screwbean, called by the Kamia *anxi* and *iyix*, respectively, along with the seeds of the ironwood (*Olneya tesota*), also known as *palo fierro* in Spanish and palo verde (*Parkinsonia* sp.) were also used. Neither palo verde nor ironwood was considered a particularly desirable food resource. Acorns were also an important seasonal food, were gathered in the mountains to the west of Kamia territory in October, and acquired through trade from the southern Kumeyaay.

Hunting contributed to the diet in a minor way in terms of overall caloric intake but provided valuable protein and skin and bone for clothing, blankets, and tools. Small game, primarily rabbits, was most frequently taken, using bow and arrow or rabbit stick (*macana*). Sometimes fires were set along sloughs to drive rabbits out. Individuals with bow and arrow also hunted deer and mountain sheep. Fish were also taken in sloughs with bow and arrow and by hand, hooks, basketry scoops, and seine nets.

Colorado River Indian Tribes

The population of the CRIT reservation comprises people from the Mojave, Chemehuevi, Hopi, and Navajo. While the Hopi and Navajo were forced into the reservation from further east, both the Mojave and Chemehuevi have been in this region since the tribe split off from the Southern Paiute in the area of current-day Las Vegas. Although the origins of the Chemehuevi are of the Southern Paiute, their culture has been heavily influenced by the Mojave, testifying to the close relationship between the two tribes. Relationships between the Chemehuevi and the Mojave have not always been peaceful; however, the Mojave retained the rights to travel through the newly established Chemehuevi territory.

The subsistence pattern of the Chemehuevi was agriculturally based. Maize, squash, melons, gourds, beans, cowpeas, winter wheat, and some grasses were key crops grown in the floodplain areas along the Colorado River. Hunting and gathering were also important elements of the subsistence strategy undertaken by younger adults while the elderly stayed in the village to tend to the crops.

Spiritually, the Chemehuevi were tied to their land, with spiritual power coming from particular landmarks within their territory such as mountain peaks, caves, or springs. Puha trails link the landmarks together and are also considered to have spiritual power. The manner in which ceremonies were practiced showed the tribe's close ties with the Mojave. Hunting and gathering traditions followed the traditional Paiute pattern, as did burial practices. Other ceremonial practices testify to the Mojave influence.

Mojave were also agrarian and had a reliance on fishing in the Colorado River. It should be noted that the Chemehuevi deferred fishing rights to the Mojave. The Mojave people during the protohistoric and historic times were semisedentary. Floodplain farming was common, and the Colorado River made up the center of their territory. The extent of their territory extended on either side of the Colorado River to the east as far as the highest crest of the Black Mountains, the Buck Mountains, and the Mojave Mountains and to the west to the Sacramento, Dead, and Newberry Mountains. From north to south their territory ran from the Mohave Valley to south of what is now the City of Blythe.

The Mojave peoples were nationalistic, considering their home territory to be their own country. Frequently warring with the Halchidoma, the Mojave and Quechan joined forces to evict the Halchidoma from their territory. The Mojave then encouraged the Chemehuevi to move into the river area. Trade was of particular importance to the Mojave, who had extensive trail networks to take them to the Pacific Coast in the west and to the Cahuilla in the south and east.

In the spring and summer months the Mojave lived along the banks of the Colorado River, where they harvested crops and fished for sustenance. Crops were planted in the spring as the river, swollen from the winter rains, receded. Seeds were planted in the newly exposed and saturated mud. While the Mojave peoples relied on their crops, their major food staple was mesquite and screwbean pods, which were gathered. In the winter they moved their settlement areas to rises above the river to avoid seasonal flooding.

History

The first significant European settlement of California began during the Spanish Period (1769 to 1821) when 21 missions and four presidios were established between San Diego and Sonoma. Although located primarily along the coast, the missions dominated economic and political life over the greater California region. The purpose of the missions was primarily for political control and forced assimilation of the Native American population into Spanish society and Catholicism, along with economic support to the presidios.

In the 1700s, due to pressures from other colonizers (Russians, French, British), New Spain decided that a party should be sent north with the idea of founding both military presidios and religious missions in Alta California to secure Spain's hold on its lands. The aim of the party was twofold. The first was the establishment of presidios, which would give Spain a military presence within its lands. The second was the establishment of a chain of missions along the coast slightly inland, with the aim of Christianizing the native population. By converting the native Californians, they could be counted as Spanish subjects, thereby bolstering the colonial population within a relatively short time.

The party was led by Gaspar de Portolá and consisted of two groups: one would take an overland route, and one would go by sea. All parties were to converge on San Diego, which would be the starting point for the chain of Spanish colonies. What became known as the Portolá Expedition set out on March 24, 1769. Portolá, who was very loyal to the crown and understood the gravity of his charge, arrived in what would become San Diego on July 1, 1769. Here, he immediately founded the presidio of San Diego. Leaving one group in the southern part of Alta California, Portolá took a smaller group and began heading north to his ultimate destination of Monterey Bay. Continuing up the coast, Portolá established Monterey Bay as a Spanish possession on June 3, 1770, although it would take two expeditions to accomplish this task. Having established the presidios at San Diego and Monterey, Portolá returned to Mexico. During the first four years of Spanish presence in Alta California, Father Junípero Serra, a member of the Portolá expedition and the Catholic leader of the new province, began establishing what would become a chain of 21 coastal missions in California. The first, founded concurrently at San Diego with the presidio, was the launching point for this group. During this time, four additional missions (San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo, San Antonio de Padua, San Gabriel Arcángel, and San Luis Obispo de Tolosa) were established.

The Mexican Period (1821-1848) began with the success of the Mexican Revolution in 1821, but changes to the mission system were slow to follow. When secularization of the missions occurred in the 1830s, the missions' vast land holdings in California were divided into large land grants called ranchos. The Mexican government granted ranchos throughout California to Spanish and Hispanic soldiers and settlers (Castillo 1978; Cleland 1941). Even after the decree of secularization was issued in 1833 by the Mexican Congress, missionaries continued to operate a small diocesan church. In 1834, the San Gabriel Mission, including over 16,000 head of cattle, was turned over to the civil administrator.

In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican American War and marked the beginning of the American Period (1848 to present). The discovery of gold that same year sparked the 1849 California

Gold Rush, bringing thousands of miners and other new immigrants to California from various parts of the United States, most of whom settled in the northern part of the state. For those settlers who chose to come to southern California, much of their economic prosperity was fueled by cattle ranching rather than by gold. This prosperity, however, came to a halt in the 1860s because of severe floods and droughts, as well as legal disputes over land boundaries, which put many ranchos into bankruptcy.

Imperial County was formed in 1907 from a portion of San Diego County known as Imperial Valley and is the newest of California's counties. It is known for being one of California's most prosperous agricultural communities because of its vast canal systems stemming from the Colorado River. Diversion of the Colorado River began in 1905 and continued through 1942 when the All-American Canal was completed.

4.3.2 Applicable Regulations

State

Assembly Bill 4239

AB 4239 established the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) as the primary government agency responsible for identifying and cataloging Native American cultural resources. The bill authorized the NAHC to act in order to prevent damage to and insure Native American access to sacred sites and authorized the NAHC to prepare an inventory of Native American sacred sites located on public lands.

Public Resources Code 5097.97

No public agency and no private party using or occupying public property or operating on public property under a public license, permit, grant, lease, or contract made on or after July 1, 1977, shall in any manner whatsoever interfere with the free expression or exercise of Native American religion as provided in the United States Constitution and the California Constitution; nor shall any such agency or party cause severe or irreparable damage to any Native American sanctified cemetery, place of worship, religious or ceremonial site, or sacred shrine located on public property, except on a clear and convincing showing that the public interest and necessity so require.

Public Resources Code 5097.98 (b) and (e)

Public Resources Code (PRC) 5097.98 (b) and (e) require a landowner on whose property Native American human remains are found to limit further development activity in the vicinity until he/she confers with the NAHC-identified Most Likely Descendants (MLDs) to consider treatment options. In the absence of MLDs or of a treatment acceptable to all parties, the landowner is required to reinter the remains elsewhere on the property in a location not subject to further disturbance.

California Health and Safety Code, Section 7050.5

California Health and Safety Code, Section 7050.5 makes it a misdemeanor to disturb or remove human remains found outside a cemetery. This code also requires a project owner to halt construction if human remains are discovered and to contact the county coroner.

Local

Imperial County General Plan

The Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan includes goals, objectives, and policies for the protection of cultural resources and scientific sites that emphasize identification, documentation, and protection of cultural resources. Table 4.3-1 provides a consistency analysis of the applicable Imperial County General Plan policies relevant to cultural resources as they relate to the Project. While this EIR analyzes the Project’s consistency with the General Plan pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the Imperial County Board of Supervisors ultimately determines consistency with the General Plan.

Table 4.3-1: General Plan Consistency

General Plan Policies	Consistency with General Plan	Analysis
Conservation and Open Space Element		
<i>Conservation of Environmental Resources for Future Generations</i>		
Goal 1 – Environmental resources shall be conserved for future generations by minimizing environmental impacts in all land use decisions and educating the public on their value.	Consistent	A Cultural Resources Assessment was prepared for the Project by Chambers Group. The analysis examined the potential for significant archaeological and paleontological deposits and/or materials within the Project site and determined that the current Project has minimal potential to adversely affect any significant cultural materials. Therefore, the Project is consistent with this objective.
<i>Preservation of Cultural Resources</i>		
Goal 3 – Preserve the spiritual and cultural heritage of the diverse communities of Imperial County.	Consistent	A Cultural Resources Assessment was prepared for the Project by Chambers Group. The analysis examined the potential for significant archaeological and paleontological deposits and/or materials within the Project site and determined if the current Project has the potential to adversely affect any significant cultural materials. During completion of the survey, two newly discovered historic-period sites were identified. The new historic period sites were fully documented with the appropriate DPR 523 series forms for each of the new resources and will be submitted to the South Coast Information Center for inclusion in the archaeological database. Additionally, as discussed in Section 4.11 Tribal Cultural Resources, the County also conducted AB 52 consultations with the Quechan Indian Tribe and the Torres-Martinez Indian Tribe to identify any concerns they may have regarding the Project for the Project. Recording these new historic sites and conducting AB 52 consultation would preserve the spiritual and cultural heritage of the County; therefore, the Project is consistent with this goal.
Objective 3.1 – Protect and preserve sites of archaeological, ecological, historical, and	Consistent	See above responses.

Table 4.3-1: General Plan Consistency

General Plan Policies	Consistency with General Plan	Analysis
Conservation and Open Space Element		
scientific value, and/or cultural significance.		
Objective 3.3 – Engage all local Native American Tribes in the protection of tribal cultural resources, including prehistoric trails and burial sites.	Consistent	<p>As mentioned in this section, Chambers Group contacted the NAHC, which noted that 27 tribes may have information on cultural resources on the Project site. Letters requesting information were sent to the tribes via certified mail on October 23, 2020. Emails were also sent to the contacts in an effort to elicit a quicker response. As of January 22, 2020, the Quechan Indian Tribe has requested consultation and communications are ongoing.</p> <p>Additionally, as discussed in Section 4.11 Tribal Cultural Resources, the County also conducted AB 52 consultations with the Quechan Indian Tribe and the Torres-Martinez Indian Tribe to identify any concerns they may have regarding the Project. Thus, the Project is consistent with this objective.</p>

4.3.3 Thresholds of Significance

In order to assist in determining whether a project would have a significant effect on the environment, the County utilizes the State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G Guidelines. Appendix G states that a project may be deemed to have impacts to cultural resources if it would:

- Threshold a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?**
- Threshold b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?**
- Threshold c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?**

4.3.4 Methodology

Cultural Resources

A records search dated October 22, 2020, was obtained from the South Coastal Information Center (SCIC) at San Diego State University. The records search provided information on all documented cultural resources and previous archaeological investigations within the one-mile record search radius. Resources consulted during the records search conducted by the SCIC included the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), California Historical Landmarks, California Points of Historical Interest, and the California

State Historic Resources Inventory. Results of the records search and additional research are detailed below.

Reports within the Study Area

Based upon the records search conducted by the SCIC, 22 cultural resource studies have previously been completed within the 1-mile records search radius. Of the 22 previous studies, five of these studies (IM-01096, IM-01484, IM-01505, IM-01559, and IM-01642) were within the current Project site.

Previously Recorded Cultural Resources within the Study Area

Based upon the records search conducted by the SCIC, six previously recorded cultural resources were recorded within the 1-mile record search radius (Table 4.3-2). Results show no previously recorded resources within the Project site.

Table 4.3-2: Previously Recorded Cultural Resources within the Study Area

Primary Number	Trinomial	Resource Name	Site Description
P-13-003251	CA-IMP-003251	4-IMP-3251H	Pond of good water. 7 feet across, 2 feet deep.
P-13-003257	CA-IMP-003257	4-IMP-3257H	Mud volcanoes, 119 feet wide
P-13-009110	CA-IMP-008395		Remnants of five carbon dioxide (CO ₂) wells installed near the southern end of the Salton Sea.
P-13-014277	CA-IMP-012061		UPDATE Resource CA-IMP-12061/Small historic trash scatter (could not be relocated due to graded road)
P-13-014278			1-mile segment of the lateral distribution system of the East Highland canal
P-13-014279		N DRAIN	1-mile segment of the N Drain-part of the lateral distribution system of the East Highland canal

Native American Heritage Commission

Chambers Group submitted a request for a search of the Sacred Lands Files (SLF) housed at the California NAHC on October 15, 2020. The results of the search were returned on October 20, 2020, and were negative, stating that the absence of specific site information in the SLF does not indicate the absence of cultural resources in the Project site that still may be impacted by Project development. The NAHC response provided contact information for the 27 tribes that may have information on cultural resources on the Project site.

Letters requesting information were sent via certified mail on October 23, 2020. Emails were also sent to the contacts in an effort to elicit a quicker response. As of January 22, 2020, the Quechan Indian Tribe and the Torres-Martinez Indian Tribe have requested consultation and communications are ongoing.

Field Methods

Survey of the Project site took place over the course of November 4 and 5, 2020, and included Chambers Group archaeologists Kellie Kandybowicz, B.A., Sarah Roebel, B.A., and paleontologist Niranjala Kottachchi, M.A. The Project site was surveyed at 15-meter intervals, and crews were equipped with submeter accurate Global Positioning Systems (GPS) units for recording spatial data and to document the survey area and all findings through ArcGIS Collector and Survey 123. The purpose of the field survey was to visually inspect the ground surface for both paleontological and archaeologically significant materials. No geographic obstructions or impediments were present, and the crew was able to survey the Project site in its entirety. The entirety of the Project site was clear of vegetation, thus facilitating visual inspection of the ground surface; overall ground visibility was high (95 percent).

When an artifact or feature was observed during survey, the GPS data was recorded using the ArcGIS Collector application; photographs and measurements were taken; and, when applicable, for historic glass artifacts, the maker's marks and date codes were recorded for further out-of-field analysis.

4.3.5 Project Impact Analysis

Threshold a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?

Threshold b) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?

The SCIC records search and archaeological pedestrian survey resulted in the identification of eight resources within 1 mile of the Project site, six previously recorded resources, and two new resources. The two new historic-period sites were identified and recorded within the Project site during the survey, temporarily referred to as 21268-001 and 21268-002. 21268-001 is a historic-period machine-made water retention basin with a small glass scatter locus. Both the feature and the artifacts date to roughly the 1950s to 1960s. 21268-002 is a multi-component, historic-period trash scatter and duck pond feature dating to two separate occupation periods. The first occupation period is between 1910 and 1940; the second occupation period likely began between the 1950s and 1970s, and its use extended through 2010 when the duck ponds were fully abandoned. The six previously recorded resources identified in the records search were not located within the Project site (Appendix D).

Based on the background research and results of the cultural pedestrian survey, Chambers Group does not recommend that any further archaeological testing or evaluation occur for any of the above listed archaeological sites prior to construction. Due to the highly disturbed nature of the Project site, archaeological monitoring is not required.

Impacts to historical and archaeological resources would be less than significant.

Threshold c) Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

Construction of the Proposed Project would involve grading, which may have the potential to uncover unknown human remains. However, if human remains are found during Project ground-disturbing activities, the Project would be required to adhere to the State of California Health and Safety Code

Section 7050.5 which states that no further disturbance shall occur until the Imperial County Medical Examiner-Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98. In the event of an unanticipated discovery of human remains, the Imperial County Medical Examiner-Coroner would be notified immediately. If the human remains are determined to be prehistoric, the Medical Examiner-Coroner would notify the NAHC, which would notify a most likely descendant (MLD). The MLD would complete an inspection of the site within 48 hours of notification and may recommend scientific removal and nondestructive analysis of human remains and items associated with Native American burials (NPS 1983). Compliance with these regulations would ensure impacts to human remains resulting from the Project would be less than significant.

4.3.6 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are defined in CEQA as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15355). Stated in another way, “a cumulative impact consists of an impact which is created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR together with other projects causing relating impacts” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 [a][1]).

Similar to the Proposed Project, ground-disturbing activities associated with cumulative projects would have the potential to uncover previously unknown archaeological resources and human remains. The Proposed Project, in combination with cumulative development, could contribute to the loss of undeveloped land, which could potentially contain cultural resources. Determinations regarding the significance of impacts of the related projects on cultural resources would be made on a case-by-case basis and, if necessary, the applicants of the related projects would be required to implement appropriate mitigation measures. The Project site is highly disturbed and has low potential for significant cultural resources that have not been well documented or recorded. Therefore, this is considered a less than cumulatively considerable impact.

4.3.7 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required, as all Project impacts regarding cultural resources are less than significant.

4.3.8 Level of Significance after Mitigation

No mitigation measures are required; impacts related to cultural resources would remain less than significant.